

HAMPTON VA



2015 State Legislative Priorities

for the

Virginia General Assembly



FROM THE SEA TO THE STARS.

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Preface

The 2015 Virginia General Assembly convenes January 14, 2015 for what is scheduled to be a “short,” 30-day session. As we head into 2015, local and state governments have had to make several significant budgetary adjustments due to a greater than anticipated decline in state revenues, with more revenue losses to be made up in FY 2016. When the General Assembly’s joint money committees met in August 2014, it was reported that there would be an estimated \$2.2 billion shortfall for the 2014/2016 biennium, almost a billion more than the shortfall that state budget officers projected earlier in 2014. Consequently, the state has reforecast its general fund revenues, which will likely include further reduced payroll withholding growth expectations. And, with this, major budget cuts. With this substantial budget shortfall, the City of Hampton joins all localities in requesting that every possible effort be made to not decrease funding to local governments. This is the theme of this year’s legislative agenda, as several state mandates in one form or another disproportionately fall on the City of Hampton. These state mandates or programs translate to an increased burden on the citizens of Hampton and, by necessity, cost shifting that may ultimately lead to less services or revenue enhancement at the local level.

The City of Hampton has the highest per capita population of veterans than any other locality in the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also in the United States. The City is proud to host our veterans and know that they have found a well-run and responsive local government with an abundance of natural resources, health care facilities, and a genuinely caring community. However, this fact brings with it a unique set of challenges especially as state mandated tax relief programs hit our local budget so dramatically.

A repeated entry in the Hampton legislative agenda is the issue of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) that the Commonwealth pays the City of Hampton for the Fort Monroe Authority. Clearly this is a unique PILOT situation because of the residential aspect to Fort Monroe that is now at 100% residential occupancy. The City of Hampton believes that the Commonwealth of Virginia should be made whole when it comes to residential leases at Fort Monroe and that rents collected should account for the Payment in Lieu of Taxes owed to the City of Hampton.

A third theme to the partnership between the state and local governments involves a change to the Hampton treasurers collection efforts. The Hampton treasurer, under contract to the Commonwealth Attorney is aggressively collecting fines and fees that benefit not only the Commonwealth, but our local government. The interference with *existing*, successful collection efforts is counter productive, especially as delinquent fines, costs, penalties, forfeitures and restitution represent enormous sums that are due to state and local governments. Every taxpayer has a vested interest in collecting these sums in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Budget realities aside, the effects of sequestration and Hampton Roads’ dependence on federal military and ancillary facilities, the City of Hampton is working very hard to offset and diversify our economy through aggressive economic development. And, our partnership with our federal governmental facilities is stronger than ever. Hampton’s partnership with the Commonwealth and the federal government was strengthened, and the region greatly assisted, by the awarding of \$5 million from the Commonwealth’s Federal Action Contingency Trust Fund over FY 2014 and FY 2015 to protect Langley Air Force Base from encroachment of incompatible uses.

The City matched state funding dollar for dollar and with warp speed has purchased, or is in the process of purchasing, property from all willing sellers in the Langley “Clear Zone.” These actions help to protect Langley AFB from future Department of Defense or BRAC-like cuts or loss of mission. Hopefully, Hampton’s aggressive stance will serve as a magnet for additional mission and jobs at Langley. The City would like to thank the General Assembly and the Governor for recognizing the importance of the Langley AFB mission and the partnership with the federal government and the City.

Hampton is facing down our fiscal challenges that are due primarily to the combination of lower revenues in the real estate tax and increases in mandatory expenditures. However, there is precious little left to cut in our local budget without significant reduction or elimination of services that Hampton taxpayers value. Other than an increase in public safety funding and other adjustments, most city departments have flat or declining budgets. This is not a sustainable condition for the long-term. These departments have had to cover increased costs of goods and services, like all Virginians have. In addition, they have been forced to cover the costs of unfunded mandates, mostly from the state. The budget choices the City of Hampton made have been tough and require new ways of doing business. Hampton is rising to the occasion. Despite the challenges, Hampton in its FY 2015 budget protected core services and invested in activities that will make the city even safer, cleaner and stronger economically. Hampton made the tough choices we were called to make in the least damaging way possible and in a manner that respects the public input that was provided, not just in this budget year, but in prior years, as well. However, we are desperate for the state government to realize that any one the 3 challenges highlighted above put our local budget in a precarious situation, but when taken together, it truly is not sustainable without a dramatic decrease in services to the citizens of Hampton or an increase in revenues. We do urge the Commonwealth to look for other ways to share the pain that local governments must endure as cuts and program costs are passed down.

On a positive note, the economy of Hampton and the local housing market is improving and may be significantly better next year. New housing construction is up, and high value houses are being built. New retail and restaurants are popping up in many locations; and, businesses are announcing expansions and new locations. Hampton is home to small start-up companies like Mango Mango Preserves, featured this year on Shark Tank, and rapidly expanding international businesses like Measurement Specialties, featured in Fortune and Forbes magazines. In mid-July, Governor McAuliffe announced that Liberty Source PBC would locate in Hampton bringing almost 600 jobs. Additionally, Ferguson will move its sales center to Hampton bringing upwards of 350 jobs and FedEx will build a 200,000 square foot distribution center near Langley. This is all great news and why residents and business Choose Hampton.

Several themes emerge from this year’s legislative package for the 2015 General Assembly that are a direct reflection on the Hampton budget process and input received working on the City’s FY 2015 budget, as well as from City Council members and City employees.

They are:

Stemming the Tide of Unfunded State Mandates and Cost Shifts From the State to Hampton. Do Not Balance the State Budget on the Backs of Local Government:

- Fort Monroe Authority Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the City of Hampton should not be a burden on the state taxpayer or the taxpayers of Hampton. FMA should collect in rents sum sufficient to cover the tax liability to the City
- Requesting the Governor and the General Assembly to 1) Refrain from Balancing the State Budget on the Backs of Local Government; 2) Reduce or eliminate unfunded state Mandates like the Line of Duty Act.
- BPOL, Machinery and Tools, and Merchants Capital Tax should not be reduced, eliminated, or otherwise constrain local government's revenue sources.
- State Constitution-mandated tax relief that disproportionately impacts certain localities. [
- Allows the Commonwealth's Treasurer's the ability to continue to operate under contract to Commonwealth's Attorneys to collect fines, fees, and restitution.
- Additional funding to implement urban stormwater control based on Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan

Transportation Initiatives:

- Peninsula Transit Fixed Guideway Corridor Study
- Commonwealth Transportation Board Appointments and Aligning with Congressional Districts
- Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC) Voting to allow the mayor or chair of the board of supervisors to designate another member of council to cast a vote for the chief elected official on behalf of the locality at HRTAC meetings.
- HRTAC use of Weldon Cooper Center population projections will not accurately reflect true population of the City and will affect transportation funding position.
- Funding for public transportation to maintain and expand.

Charter Changes:

- Resolution Requesting the General Assembly to Amend Chapter 3, Section 3.01 of the Charter of the City of Hampton Entitled "Composition; Election and Terms" Pertaining to Council Members Running for Mayor

Other:

- Granting localities broad, local option authority for an annual boat decal fee based on the size of the boat using tonnage as a separate class in lieu of the personal property tax rate, or alternatively to permit Hampton to do so as a pilot.

HAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

George Wallace, Mayor
Linda Curtis, Vice Mayor
W. H. “Billy” Hobbs, Jr.
Will J. Moffett
Teresa V. Schmidt
Chris Osby Snead
Donnie R. Tuck

HAMPTON STATE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION

<p>John C. Miller (D) 1st Senate District P.O. Box 6113 Newport News, VA 23606 757.595.1100 district01@senate.virginia.gov Session: 804.698.7501 General Assembly Building Rm 306</p>	<p>Gordon Helsel (R) 91st House District 2A Victory Boulevard Poquoson, VA 23662 757.969.9036 DelGHelsel@house.virginia.gov Session: 804.698.1091 General Assembly Building Rm 812</p>
<p>Mamie E. Locke, Ph.D. (D) 2nd Senate District P.O. Box 9048 Hampton, VA 23670 757.825.5880 district02@senate.virginia.gov Session: 804.698.7502 General Assembly Building Rm 427</p>	<p>Jeion Antonia Ward (D) 92 House District 2017 Cunningham Dr, Suite 209 Hampton, VA 23666 757.827.5921 DelJWard@house.virginia.gov Session: 804.698.1092 General Assembly Building Rm 502</p>
<p>Thomas K. Norment, Jr. (R) 3rd Senate District P.O. Box 6205 Williamsburg, VA 23188 757-259-7810 district03@senate.virginia.gov Session: 804.698.7503 General Assembly Building Rm 621</p>	<p>Mamye E. BaCote (D) 95th District P.O. Box 5154 Newport News, VA 23605 757.244.4415 DelMBaCote@house.virginia.gov Session: 804.698.1095 General Assembly Building Rm 507</p>

Legislative and State Budget Requests

Fort Monroe Authority Payment in Lieu of Taxes Budget Amendment

Request:

The City of Hampton requests the Governor to remove the Payment in Lieu of Tax cap on the City and that the FMA collect from residential and commercial renters the sum necessary to pay the City of Hampton the PILOT as the General Assembly prescribed in §2.2-2342.

Justification:

The City of Hampton is acutely aware of the budget gap that exists with the current Commonwealth budget and the forecast ahead. The City does not wish to add to that burden. However, the City has identified that both the Commonwealth and the City could be made whole at Fort Monroe if a new paradigm was used in order to recompense the City what is owed under the Payment in Lieu of Taxes for Fort Monroe.

The 2014 session of the General Assembly capped the amount of the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) to the City of Hampton at \$983,960 for FY 2015 and FY 2016. Yet the most recent assessments indicate a payment due to the City by the Fort Monroe Authority in the amount of \$1,636,975, leaving a gap of \$653,015 that would be absorbed by Hampton taxpayers.

The Commonwealth of Virginia instituted a PILOT to compensate the City of Hampton for the tax revenue that it loses because of the nature of the ownership of Fort Monroe residing with the Commonwealth of Virginia through the Fort Monroe Authority. The statutory framework for the Commonwealth of Virginia PILOT for Fort Monroe and its relationship to the City of Hampton is found in the Code of Virginia, § 2.2-2342 and was enacted in 2011 in recognition of the foregone property tax revenue that Hampton would experience. The cap on the PILOT was originally based on 35 acres at Fort Monroe, but now 232 acres are under its control. Residential rentals are at a 95% occupancy rate and at April 30, 2014 the residential division reported \$2,287,026 in rental revenue year to date, a 23% increase over the same period from a year ago. On another positive note, net operating income was over \$500,000.

This is a good news story for the Commonwealth of Virginia and clearly shows there is strong interest in renting residential property at Fort Monroe because of its intrinsic beauty and amenities offered. With the overarching goal of a day when the Fort Monroe Authority is no longer a budget line item for the Commonwealth of Virginia and in order to appropriately allot tax liability where it is due, the City of Hampton requests that the Fort Monroe Authority begin collecting in rents the appropriate taxes that would allow the Commonwealth of Virginia to pay the PILOT to the City of Hampton as the General Assembly prescribed in §2.2-2342. With the gap between what is owed to the City and the state budget PILOT cap, the state could either increase residential rents on the 174 rental units or otherwise dedicate a portion of rent paid to the FMA PILOT for the City of Hampton. In concert with removing the cap on the PILOT, there would not be any additional appropriation needed for the FMA to pay the PILOT to the City.

Budget Language:

ITEM 119 A.5

The FMA *shall collect in rent the sum necessary to pay the fee* to the City of Hampton pursuant to § 2.2-2342, Code of Virginia.

Treasurers Fines and Costs Collections Budget Issue

Request:

The City of Hampton requests the Governor to remove the sunset provision in the budget bill that would prevent treasurers from collecting delinquent court fines, fees, costs, penalties and restitution.

Justification:

A last-minute language amendment in the 2014 budget conference report, offered on behalf of private collection attorneys, effectively will deprive local governments of the ability to have county and city treasurers collect delinquent fines, fees and costs beginning in 2016. We are asking the General Assembly and the Governor to remove this sunset provision.

In 2003, at the request of the Virginia Treasurers Association, the General Assembly authorized Commonwealth's Attorneys to engage local treasurers to collect delinquent court fines, fees, costs, penalties and restitution. (HB 2461 (2003), 2003 Acts of Assembly, ch. 262)

The City of Hampton treasurer is in the business of collecting monies owed to state and local governments, and has a very successful track record of maximizing collections. Providing a local option to put the treasurer to work on these collections gave Commonwealth's Attorneys another tool with which to pursue the hundreds of millions of dollars in outstanding fines and costs.

In order to provide additional incentives to collect the hundreds of millions of dollars in outstanding fines and costs, the 2013 Appropriations Act (Item 72.J) authorized the addition of a collection fee, up to 17%, to the unpaid fines and costs, by *all* collectors of delinquent fines and costs – whether private attorneys, collection agencies, the Department of Taxation, or a local treasurer. The 2014-16 Budget Bill carried this authority forward in Item 70.I.

The eleventh-hour amendment that was placed into the Special Session budget conference report bars treasurers from collecting on a contingent-fee basis beginning in 2016. (Item 70.I) They will be able to receive only a small, fixed administrative fee provided in Code § 58.1-3958 (not to exceed \$35). But the language amendment leaves all other collectors – whether attorneys, non-attorney collections agencies, or the Department of Taxation – free to collect on a contingent-fee basis. The reality is that it makes completely infeasible *existing* collection contracts in a number of jurisdictions, and will preclude other Commonwealth's Attorneys who are actively considering a referral to the treasurer from carrying forward with these plans.

The City of Hampton has had tremendous success and brought direct benefit to the taxpayers of Hampton through this program. For example, Hampton collected \$3.9 million in FY11-FY13.

First, interfering with *existing*, successful collection efforts – and forcing those Commonwealth's Attorneys to start over with new collections service providers – makes no sense. Delinquent fines, costs, penalties, forfeitures and restitution represent enormous sums due to state and local

governments. Every taxpayer has a vested interest in collecting these sums in the most efficient and effective manner possible. These *existing* collection efforts are expected to yield more than \$6 million this year alone in Virginia.

Second, taking collections options away from Commonwealth's Attorneys needlessly ties the hands of the officers statutorily charged with collection responsibility. If collection lawyers are more effective collectors than treasurers, Commonwealth's Attorneys will choose them. There should be no need to legislate the "treasurer option" out of existence through the Appropriation Act if collection lawyers and collection agencies can do a better job. The amendments amount to the creation of a legislatively-sanctioned monopoly on collection activity.

Taxpayers support the collection mechanism in the Treasurer's Office through their local and state taxes. Taxpayers get additional usage out of this valuable public resource and it provides a better return on taxpayer dollars. The argument has been made by collection lawyers that treasurers are somehow "competing" with them, but this doesn't hold water. The Treasurers' governmental responsibility is collections.

Budget Language

ITEM 70

I. In accordance with the provisions of § 19.2-349, Code of Virginia, attorneys for the Commonwealth may employ individuals, or contract with private attorneys, private collection agencies, or other state or local agencies, to assist in collection of delinquent fines, costs, forfeitures, penalties, and restitution. If the attorney for the Commonwealth employs individuals, the costs associated with employing such individuals may be paid from the proceeds of the amounts collected provided that the cost is apportioned on a pro rata basis according to the amount collected which is due the state and that which is due the locality. If the attorney for the Commonwealth does not undertake collection, the attorney for the Commonwealth shall, as soon as practicable, take steps to ensure that any agreement or contract with an individual, attorney or agency complies with the terms of the current Master Guidelines Governing Collection of Unpaid Delinquent Court-Ordered Fines and Costs Pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-34 9 promulgated by the Office of the Attorney General, the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court, the Department of Taxation, and the Compensation Board ("the Master Guidelines"). Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the delinquent amounts owed shall be increased by seventeen (17) percent to help offset the costs associated with employing such individuals or contracting with such agencies or individuals. If such increase would exceed the contracted collection agent's fee, then the delinquent amount owed shall be increased by the percentage or amount of the collection agent's fee. ~~Effective January 1, 2016, as provided in § 19.2-349, Code of Virginia, treasurers and other local government entities shall be prohibited from being compensated on a contingency basis but shall be instead compensated administrative cost pursuant to § 58.1-3958, Code of Virginia.~~ *Collection fees shall be paid on a contingency basis out of the proceeds of the amounts collected.* The attorneys for the Commonwealth shall account for the amounts collected and the fees and costs associated with the collections consistent with procedures issued by the Auditor of Public Accounts.

Charter Change for Election of Mayor

Request:

The City asks that the General Assembly amend Chapter 3, section 3.01 of the Charter of the City of Hampton so that a candidate running for mayor of Hampton shall not run for any other office and that sitting city councilpersons must resign as a councilmember in order to run for mayor.

Justification:

On Wednesday, October 22 the Hampton City Council voted to ask the General Assembly to change the City charter on sitting councilpersons running for mayor with a vote of 5 yeas and 2 nays.

The current situation results in an uneven playing field for some council members who may wish to run for mayor because Council members elected on the same cycle as the Mayor currently have to give up their seats to run for Mayor, while council members elected on the off cycle do not have to give up their seats to run for Mayor. A charter change to make clear that any council member who wishes to run for mayor must resign their city council seat in order to run. This has the added benefit of a more orderly transition to election for the vacated city council seat.

Resolution Requesting the General Assembly to Amend Chapter 3, Section 3.01 of the Charter of the City of Hampton Entitled “Composition; Election and Terms” Pertaining to Council Members Running for Mayor

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Hampton, Virginia:

That the Virginia General Assembly is requested to amend Chapter 3, section 3.01 of the Charter of the City of Hampton entitled “Composition; election and terms” by adding a new section 3.01:2 entitled “Election of mayor” as follows:

CHAPTER 3. - CITY COUNCIL

Sec. 3.01. - Composition; election and terms.

The council shall consist of seven (7) members, a mayor and six (6) councilmen, who shall be elected at large from the qualified voters of the city. There shall be a general municipal election on the first Tuesday in May of each even-numbered year. In May of nineteen hundred eighty-six there shall be elected three (3) councilmen, and in May of nineteen hundred eighty-eight there shall be elected three (3) councilmen and thereafter their respective successors shall be elected every four (4) years. In the May nineteen hundred eighty-four municipal election and every four (4) years thereafter there shall be elected at large from the voters of the city a mayor. The members shall take office on July one of the year in which their election takes place and shall qualify in the manner prescribed by general law, and remain in office until their successors have qualified. Provided, however, that in the municipal election held in May, nineteen hundred eighty-two, there shall be elected two (2) councilmen to serve four-year terms and a mayor to serve a two-year term and in the municipal election held in May, nineteen hundred eighty-four, there shall be elected four (4) councilmen with the councilman receiving the smallest vote among

the four (4) elected serving a two-year term and the remaining three (3) councilmen serving four-year terms; in such year a mayor shall be elected as hereinabove provided. The council shall be a continuing body, and no measure pending before it shall abate or be discontinued by reason of the expiration of the term of office or the removal of the members of the body or any of them.

Sec. 3.01:1. - Nomination of candidates for mayor and council.

Candidates for the office of mayor and council shall be qualified voters of the city and shall file their notice of candidacy and be nominated only by petition in the manner prescribed by general law.

Sec. 3.01:2. – Election of mayor.

A candidate running for mayor shall not run for any other seat.

In the event any councilmember during his or her tenure of office desires to be a candidate for mayor, he or she is eligible to do so, but must tender resignation as a councilmember at least ten days prior to the final date for filing petitions and notices of acceptance as specified by general law, such resignation to be effective on June 30th of the election year. Such resignation will state the councilmember's intention to run for mayor, requires no formal acceptance by the remaining councilmembers and is final and irrevocable as of the date it is tendered.

The remaining two year term of office of any councilmember who has resigned for the stated purpose of running for mayor will be filled at the same succeeding general municipal election at which the office for mayor is filled. Such two year term shall begin on the first day of July next following the date of such election.

Notice for Oyster Leases and Permits

Request:

The City of Hampton supports a bill to require notice to adjacent property owners and localities prior to Virginia Marine Resources Commission approval of oyster leases and certain permits so that the community may be more informed and involved. The proposed legislation would require the applicant for oyster leases and permits to bear the costs of notification.

Justification:

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC) regulates aquaculture activities on state-owned submerged land, including oyster gardening and farming. Different activities require different approvals. All of the following require a Joint Permit Application. This summary focuses on the VMRC-specific requirements, including those for:

1. Gardening (Growing) for Non-Commercial Purposes
2. Farming for Commercial Purposes Using “Low Profile Structures” Such as Nets and Trays
3. Farming for Commercial Purposes Using “Temporary Protective Enclosures” Such as Bottom Cages

(1) Oyster Gardening (Growing) for Non-Commercial Purposes:

Growing shellfish adjacent to private piers or within a property owner’s riparian area for private non-commercial purposes in an area not exceeding 160 square feet (other conditions apply). 4 VAC 20-336-10 et seq.

Current Approval Requirements	Current Notice Requirements	Proposed Changes
No ground lease required	N/A	N/A
VMRC General Permit #3 (gardening permit) from Habitat Management Division	None required	None

(2) Farming for Commercial Purposes Using “Low Profile Structures” Such as Nets and Trays:

Growing shellfish for sale in cages extending no more than 12 inches off the bottom on an oyster ground lease causing minimal adverse effect on navigation (other conditions apply). 4 VAC 20-335-10 et seq.

Current Approval Requirements	Current Notice Requirements	Proposed Changes
Ground lease from VMRC	<p>Va. Code Ann. § 28.2-606:</p> <p>Applications for ground leases must be:</p> <p>(1) Posted for at least 60 days:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. At the courthouse of the county or city in which the ground applied for lies, and b. In at least 2 or more prominent places in the vicinity of the ground; <p>(2) Published in a newspaper of general circulation “at least once a week for four consecutive weeks”</p>	<p>In addition to the current requirements, VMRC must also provide notice:</p> <p>(3) In writing to all riparian property owners within 500 feet of the proposed area to be leased at least 60 days prior to execution of a lease; and</p> <p>(4) In writing to the city manager or county administrator of the locality where the proposed lease will be located at least 60 days prior to execution of a lease.</p>
No additional VMRC permit necessary	N/A	N/A

(3) Farming for Commercial Purposes Using “Temporary Protective Enclosures” Such as Bottom Cages:

Growing shellfish for sale using cages, racks, trays, or other containers greater than 12 inches above the bottomlands or to be marked on surface with buoys (other conditions apply). 4 VAC 20-1130-10 et seq.

Current Requirements	Current Notice Requirements	Proposed Changes
Ground lease from VMRC	<p>Va. Code Ann. § 28.2-606:</p> <p>Applications for ground leases must be:</p> <p>(1) Posted for at least 60 days:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> At the courthouse of the county or city in which the ground applied for lies, and In at least 2 or more prominent places in the vicinity of the ground; <p>(2) Published in a newspaper of general circulation “at least once a week for four consecutive weeks”</p>	<p>In addition to the current requirements, VMRC must also provide notice:</p> <p>(3) In writing to all riparian property owners within 500 feet of the proposed area to be leased at least 60 days prior to execution of a lease; and</p> <p>(4) In writing to the city manager or county administrator of the locality where the proposed lease will be located at least 60 days prior to execution of a lease.</p>
VMRC General Permit #4 (temporary enclosure permit) from Fisheries Management Division	<p>Virginia Administrative Code § 4 VAC 20-1130-30:</p> <p>(1) Leaseholder must give notice to VMRC, including information on riparian property owners within 500 feet of the proposed area.</p> <p>(2) Either leaseholder or VMRC must notify the adjacent property owners.</p> <p>(3) VMRC may publish notice of the proposed placement in the newspaper inviting written comment on the placement.</p> <p>(4) VMRC may, if there is “significant and substantive opposition from persons residing on or using the waters proximate to the leasehold” convene a public meeting.</p>	<p>Amend notice requirements to require that:</p> <p>No later than 30 days after receiving notification that a permit is being sought, VMRC must:</p> <p>(1) Provide written notice to the city manager or county administrator of the locality where the proposed temporary protective enclosures will be located;</p> <p>(2) Provide written notice to all riparian property owners within 500 feet of the area where the proposed temporary protective enclosures will be located;</p> <p>(3) Publish notice of the proposed placement in the newspaper inviting written comment at least once a week for four consecutive weeks; and</p> <p>(4) Convene a public hearing on the proposal.</p>

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 28.2-603, 28.2-603.2, and 28.2-606 of the Code of Virginia, relating to notification to localities and adjacent riparian landowners regarding oyster planting ground leases and temporary protective enclosures.

§ 28.2-603. General oyster planting grounds.

A. Waterfront that is not already assigned or reserved for the riparian owners, and the beds of the bays, rivers, and creeks and shores of the sea lying outside the limits of navigation projects adopted and authorized by the Congress and not required for the disposal of materials dredged incident to the maintenance of such projects, and grounds other than public oyster beds, rocks, or shoals, as defined by law and included in the Baylor survey, may be occupied for the purpose of planting or propagating oysters, including the use of temporary protective enclosures in compliance with this chapter and Commission regulations, and may be leased by the Commissioner upon the receipt of a proper application.

B. *Prior to execution of a lease as described in subsection (A), the Commissioner shall comply with all notice requirements as set forth in § 28.2-606.*

§ 28.2-603.2. Commissioner to provide notice.

A. At least 30 days before placing temporary protective enclosures on a leasehold pursuant to § 28.2-603.1, the leaseholder shall provide written notification to the Commissioner that identifies the leasehold, the approximate maximum number of enclosures to be placed on the leasehold at any given time, and the estimated date such placement will begin. No later than 30 days after receiving such notification, the Commissioner ~~may~~ *shall provide written notification of receipt of the application to the city manager or county administrator of the locality where the temporary protective enclosures are proposed to be located and to all riparian property owners within 500 feet of the area where the temporary protective enclosures are proposed to be located. Notice sent by registered or certified mail to the last known address of such owner as shown on the current real estate tax assessment books or current real estate tax assessment records shall be deemed adequate compliance with this requirement. The Commissioner shall also publish notice of the proposed placement in a newspaper of general circulation serving the area in which the leasehold is located at least once a week for four consecutive weeks. In determining whether to publish such notice, the Commissioner shall consider the potential effect on existing uses of waters proximate to the leasehold and the potential for conflict between the proposed placement and such uses.* The written notifications and public notice shall invite written comment on the proposed placement and include information concerning the submission of written comments. The Commission may receive written comments for no more than 30 days following publication of notice.

B. ~~If, on the basis of written comments, the Commissioner finds significant and substantive opposition from persons residing on or using the waters proximate to the leasehold, the~~ The Commissioner shall convene a public meeting on the proposal no more than 30 days after the close of the comment period. No later than 15 days after the public meeting, the Commissioner shall (i) approve the proposal, (ii) approve the proposal with conditions, or (iii) deny the proposal. If the Commissioner denies the proposal, the leaseholder may request approval of the proposal before a hearing of the Commission.

C. The cost of the notice required in this section shall be borne by the applicant. ~~If the Commissioner determines not to publish public notice, the Commissioner shall, no later than 30 days after receiving written notification of the proposal, advise the leaseholder to proceed in accordance with the requirements of the general permit. If the Commissioner publishes public notice but does not find significant and substantive opposition by persons residing on or using the waters to the leasehold, the Commissioner shall, no later than 15 days after the close of the comment period, advise the leaseholder to proceed in accordance with the requirements of the general permit.~~

§ 28.2-606. Posting of notice of applications.

*A. Upon receipt of an application, the Commissioner shall direct notice thereof to be: ~~Notice of the application shall be~~ (i) posted by the ~~Commission~~ for not less than sixty days at the courthouse of the county or city in which the ground applied for lies, and in at least two or more prominent places in the vicinity of the ground; ~~and~~ (ii) published at least once a week for four consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation in that county or city; (iii) *provided in writing to all riparian property owners within 500 feet of the proposed area to be leased at least sixty days prior to execution of a lease. Notice sent by registered or certified mail to the last known address of such owner as shown on the current real estate tax assessment books or current real estate tax assessment records shall be deemed adequate compliance with this requirement; and (iv) provided in writing to the city manager or county administrator of the locality where the proposed lease will be located at least 60 days prior to execution of a lease.**

B. The cost of the notice required in this section shall be borne by the applicant.

Overgrown Shrubs and Trees

Request:

The City of Hampton requests that the General Assembly amend the statute regarding removal of trash, cutting of grass and weeds, to include overgrown shrubs and trees.

Justification:

The City of Hampton takes a keen interest in quality of life issues and is looking for additional tools to assist neighborhoods, homeowners and residents with keeping up the appearance and value of homes in the city.

According to Debbie Blanton of the Hampton Clean City Commission, properties that are unkempt, with overgrown grass, weeds, shrubs and trees, litter and debris have a definite impact on property values, as well as act as a breeding ground for rodents, insects, and snakes.

Legislative Language:

§ 15.2-901. Locality may provide for removal or disposal of trash, cutting of grass and weeds; penalty in certain counties; penalty.

A. Any locality may, by ordinance, provide that:

3. The owners of occupied or vacant developed or undeveloped property therein, including such property upon which buildings or other improvements are located, shall cut the grass, weeds, overgrown shrubs and trees, and other foreign growth on such property or any part thereof at such time or times as the governing body shall prescribe; or may, whenever the governing body deems it necessary, after reasonable notice as determined by the locality, have such grass, weeds, overgrown shrubs and trees, or other foreign growth cut by its agents or employees, in which event the cost and expenses thereof shall be chargeable to and paid by the owner of such property and may be collected by the locality as taxes are collected. For purposes of this provision, one written notice per growing season to the owner of record of the subject property shall be considered reasonable notice. No such ordinance adopted by any county shall have any force and effect within the corporate limits of any town. No such ordinance adopted by any county having a density of population of less than 500 per square mile shall have any force or effect except within the boundaries of platted subdivisions or any other areas zoned for residential, business, commercial or industrial use. No such ordinance shall be applicable to land zoned for or in active farming operation.

Eliminating Mandate for Consent Agreement for Unlicensed Day Care “Come and Go” Facilities

Request: Amend State Code to resolve the day care “come and go” provision.

Justification: An inherent conflict exists regarding the current requirements for day care licensure exemptions and local government, parents, juvenile law enforcement agencies, community leaders and youth service organizations working to provide a safe, after school experience for our children.

When after school and summer camp programs are licensed childcare centers, Virginia regulations do not allow a child to leave that facility without parental consent. The center is thereby mandated by the Department of Social Services license to make sure that an authorized adult pick up and properly sign the child out. However, in order for a program to be exempt from being a licensed program, a center is required to have parents sign an agreement acknowledging that the program has informed them that, “...this after-school program is a 'Come and Go' center exempt from Department of Social Services Child Day Care Center licensing and that your child is allowed to sign themselves in and out of the facility and leave at-will without parents or guardian consent."

As a community, the City of Hampton is doing all it can to keep children engaged during and after school, especially at the critical times where they are more likely to engage in risky behavior affecting their safety and the community at large.

While exemptions from licensure are worthy, the parental or guardian signing out youth from an unlicensed facility should be required, just as it is from a licensed day care facility. Therefore, we request that the Code be amended to delete reference to parental consent for exempt day care facilities.

Annual Boat Decal Fee, Local Option or Hampton Pilot

Request:

The City of Hampton seeks support for imposition of broad, local option authority for localities to impose an annual boat decal fee based on the size of the boat and using tonnage as a separate class. Alternatively, Hampton requests the ability to implement an annual boat decal fee on a pilot project basis.

Justification:

The city currently has the ability to impose a tax on boats through Virginia Code §58.1-3506(a) that provides the following tangible personal property classifications for taxation of boats:

1. a. Boats or watercraft weighing five tons or more, not used solely for business purposes;
b. Boats or watercraft weighing less than five tons, not used solely for business purposes;
12. Privately owned pleasure boats and watercraft, 18 feet and over, used for recreational purposes only;
28. Privately owned pleasure boats and watercraft, motorized and under 18 feet, used for recreational purposes only;
29. Privately owned pleasure boats and watercraft, non-motorized and under 18 feet, used for recreational purposes only;

Boats are assessed at fair market value, generally derived by applying a percentage to the total original cost. The tax rate for privately owned pleasure boats and watercraft used for recreational purposes is \$.000001 per \$100 of assessed value. The tax rate for all other boats and watercraft is \$1 per \$100 of assessed value. Clearly, and as is the practice in many other Hampton Roads localities, this is a nominal fee.

A boat decal fee would allow the City to capture some revenue from the boats in the community, but would do so with a flat rate based on tonnage, as opposed to using the personal property tax that relies completely on value and that does not have a maximum, flat rate value. A boat decal fee, in lieu of personal property tax would allow Hampton to capture some revenue, and would not create a disincentive for Hampton boaters to leave the City. In lieu of a local option ability to implement a boat decal fee, Hampton would be open to implementing a pilot boat decal program.

Interstate Signage in Hampton on I-64 and I-664

Stronger language to make clear Ft. Monroe Nat'l Monument, federal government facilities also stand to benefit from better signage

Request:

A resolution asking that Interstate signage on Interstates 64 and 664 through the City of Hampton more clearly enunciate Hampton landmarks, points of interest, and “drivers” of the economy of the City and the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Justification:

Interstate signage on I-64 and I-664 through Hampton do not clearly enunciate and inform drivers of the many attractions and services that the City offers. It has been noted on several occasions that if a driver did not know better, there is very little indication that they are even passing through the City of Hampton, the first continuous English-speaking settlement. Further, important economic drivers to the City and to the region are not clearly delineated with signage. The signage along the interstate is often obscured by brush, and when visible, it's not crisp or particularly helpful to drivers. There are clear benefits to the Commonwealth, the City of Hampton, and the federal government (Fort Monroe National Monument, VA Hospital, Langley AFB, NASA Langley) for signage that is clear, visible and helpful to drivers

The Hampton City Council requests urgent and responsive action to remedy the interstate signage issue on the interstates and asks that the Virginia Department of Transportation, Fort Monroe National Monument, the Fort Monroe Authority, the Hampton Convention and Visitors Bureau and a task force of local civic and business leaders convene to devise signage and a plan for placement of signage from the Hampton city limit to the City of Newport News city limit.

Funding for Public Transportation

Request:

The City of Hampton requests that the General Assembly take action that will allow public transportation to maintain and expand service levels by including transit in the uses of HB2313 funds.

Justification:

A robust regional transit system will support regional economic competitiveness and mobility. The existing funding structure for public transportation in Hampton Roads is such that the region's transit system, planning and delivery and its ability to continue to provide service at current levels is severely jeopardized.

Hampton Roads Transit (HRT) is the local transit provider. Hampton and other HRT participating localities provide approximately 35% of HRT funding. With costs increasing every year, there has been no expansion of services. Because it is local general fund revenues that support HRT, this means that public transit is in competition with education, public safety, and other local critical needs --- all competing for limited local dollars. A dedicated revenue source that is independent of local general funds is necessary to not only sustain, but to provide needed improvements to regional transit services.

The passage of HB2313 in 2013 allowed Northern Virginia to use 70 percent of its regional revenues for regional road and transit projects. This same legislation does not allow Hampton Roads to use regional money for public transportation purposes. This inequity puts our region at a distinct disadvantage.

It should be noted that HB2313 also predicated increased federal Transportation Trust Fund dollars —a percentage of which is designated for transit— on the passage of the Federal Marketplace Fairness Act, granting States the authority to collect taxes on internet sales. Should the Federal Marketplace Fairness Act fail to pass, in January of 2015, Virginia's wholesale gas tax will increase automatically to compensate. In this event, increased revenue from the gas tax should be allocated in the same manner that MFA revenues would have been allocated under HB2313.

Funding for Peninsula Transit Corridor Study

Request:

The City of Hampton asks that the General Assembly and the Governor provide \$1.9 million in funding for a study to identify potential high capacity, fixed guideway transit corridors in Hampton and Newport News.

Justification:

Hampton Roads Transit is proposing a study to identify potential high capacity, fixed guideway transit corridors in Hampton and Ham that could connect major residential and commercial activity centers including Peninsula Town Center, Newport News Shipbuilding, City Centre at Oyster Point in Newport News, and other Peninsula destinations. This study would provide a foundation for streamlined entrance into the formal environmental review process required under the National Environmental Policy Act for major federal actions. The cost of the study is \$1.9 million.

The City of Hampton is firmly committed to the vision of a robust and vibrant transportation system that is multimodal and provides options for both workforce and leisure travelers. Options such as bus rapid transit can improve accessibility and mobility, support major employment centers, and fuel the economic engines in our communities. A fixed guideway study is the first step in a process that will ultimately yield tremendous return on investment.

Commonwealth Transportation Board Appointments

Request:

The General Assembly is requested to amend the Code of Virginia to have the Commonwealth Transportation Board primarily selected by one representative from each Congressional District and retain the current At-Large members.

Justification:

Currently, the Commonwealth Transportation Board is primarily composed of members from the construction districts across the Commonwealth. Hampton Roads is a district; Richmond and other areas are also districts. In the late 1920s, the construction districts were formulated and do not accurately represent the current population. As presently designated, these districts reflect areas where VDOT once had centralized operations plus the northern Virginia District. Since that time, the Commonwealth's population has coalesced along the I-95/I-64 corridor and the I-66/I-81 corridor. The construction districts and the representation on the Commonwealth Transportation Board do not correlate with where the majority of the people in the Commonwealth live.

For instance, in Hampton Roads, this would include four members representing the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Congressional Districts plus At-Large members residing in that region. Congressman Bobby Scott represents the 3rd District, which consists of the I-64 Corridor and southeast Virginia. Congressman Rob Wittman represents the 1st District, which is the I-64 Corridor and Route 17 through to Fredericksburg. Congressman Scott Rigell represents the 2nd District, which includes the Eastern Shore, all of Virginia Beach, and parts of Norfolk and Hampton. Congressman Randy Forbes represents the 4th District, which consists of Chesapeake, the Route 58 and the Route 460 Corridor. Having the representation aligned with the Commonwealth's population is the most equitable way for Commonwealth Transportation Board to prioritize funds and programs for the Commonwealth.

Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC) Voting

Request:

The General Assembly is requested to amend chapter 678 of the Acts of Assembly 2014 session to allow the Chief Elected Officer of a governing body of any of the fourteen counties and cities embraced by the commission, if he or she is unable to attend a meeting, to designate another council or board member to represent him or her. This designation shall be made to the chair of the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC) with as much notice as possible before the meeting for which an alternate will be voting. Such notification to the chair shall be made through writing or electronically. Such appointment of alternate shall be for only the upcoming meeting, which the Chief Elected Official is unable to attend.

Justification:

Currently the legislation established by the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC) requires that the Chief Elected Officer (CEO) of the governing body of each of the fourteen counties and cities, embraced by the commission, shall be the voting member.

The Acts of Assembly state that decisions by the commission shall be by: 1) a quorum constituting a majority of the elected officials of the Commission, 2) the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting Members present and voting, and 3) two-thirds of the chief elected Officers of the counties and cities embraced by Planning District 23 who are present and voting and whose counties and cities include at least two-thirds of the population embraced by the Commission.

Since most of the chief elected Officers (i.e. mayors, chairs of the board of supervisors) also have careers that require their attention, their elected positions are held part-time. Thus, it is reasonable that full-time employment requirements may occasionally take priority over attendance at a HRTAC meeting. Furthermore, a mayor or chair could be incapacitated for many months, and that jurisdiction would, therefore, not be represented at a HRTAC meeting and to a real extent could become disenfranchised.

Therefore, it is requested that the HRTAC enabling legislation be amended to allow the mayor or chair of the board of supervisors to designate another member of his council or board to cast a vote for the chief elected official on behalf of the locality at HRTAC meetings.

Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission (HRTAC) Use of Weldon Cooper Population Information

Request:

The General Assembly is requested to amend Chapter 678 of the Virginia Act of the 2014 session to utilize the population estimates made by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service of the University of Virginia. This would mean that the decennial census numbers would be utilized during the year of the census. Each year, thereafter, the population estimates developed by Weldon Cooper would be utilized rather than only the mid-decennial projections.

This would likely have little change in the results of voting in the near term, but over the long term, could have unintended consequences if the population projections proved flawed. Population estimates of the Weldon Cooper Center are utilized as currently laid out in code for other purposes.

Justification:

Currently the enabling legislation of the Hampton Roads Transportation Accountability Commission, Chapter 678 of the Virginia Act of the 2014 session, stipulates that the population of the counties and cities embraced by the commission shall be the population that is determined by the most recently preceding decennial census, except that on July 1st of the 5th year following the census, the population of each county and city shall be adjusted based on population projections made by the Weldon Cooper Center for Population Services of the University of Virginia. Several localities in Hampton Roads are concerned over the Weldon Cooper population projections. The City of Hampton, according to the Weldon Cooper population estimates, had a population of 139,032 on January 27, 2014. Yet, the same Weldon Cooper Center projects that in 2020 the population will be 136,417. The Weldon Cooper population projections are also extended in the future, showing a population for Hampton of 137,838 in 2030 and 139,663 in 2040.

Hampton disagrees with these population projections based on the growth of the city since the last census, according to both the US Census Bureau estimates and the Weldon Cooper Center population estimates. The City's need to create a vibrant and customer-focused transit network demands that numbers more accurately reflect growth patterns and needs.

Position Statements

Relief from Unfunded State Mandates, Do Not Balance the State Budget on the Backs of Local Governments

Request: The City of Hampton requests the Governor and the General Assembly to refrain from using local governments as a fiscal balance wheel in order to surmount revenue challenges. Off-loading of costs to local governments is neither responsible to the citizenry, nor to the fiscal health of the Commonwealth. We urge the Commonwealth to look for other ways to share the pain that local governments must endure as cuts and program costs are passed down. The state should make the difficult decisions to cut state services or raise taxes just as localities have been doing for years. Where the state requires a mandate of local governments, if the state cannot provide funding, the requirement should be eliminated or offered as local option.

Justification: Being responsible to the demands of citizens for services, local governments are on the front line of customer service. The Commonwealth habitually finds ways to reduce local government revenue streams or otherwise shift costs to local governments, thus making it extremely difficult to balance local budgets.

Unfunded state mandates are putting undue strain on the City. When taken in total, and with more cuts expected, there is a breaking point. For example, the General Assembly should fully fund the Line of Duty Act (LODA) obligations and return LODA to a state program. LODA benefit eligibility determinations should be the responsibility of the Virginia Workers' Compensation Commission and not the State Controller's Office. By extending benefits to selected classes of local employees with the promise that the state would pay for the costs, LODA has become another example of the state shifting these costs to local governments when fiscal stress is encountered at the state level. Unfortunately, LODA is another example of kicking the can down the road for local governments to deal with, and with insufficient revenue tools to deal with the issue. Where there are mandates from the state to local government, and if not funded by the state, or otherwise revenue tools to assist local governments, then the state requirement should be eliminated.

Hampton is facing down fiscal challenges that are due primarily to the combination of lower revenues in the real estate tax and increases in mandatory expenditures. However, there is precious little left to cut in our local budget without significant reduction or elimination of services that Hampton taxpayers value. Other than an increase in public safety funding and other adjustments, most city departments have flat or declining budgets. This is not a sustainable condition for the long-term. These departments have had to cover increased costs of goods and services, like all Virginians have. In addition, they have been forced to cover the costs of unfunded mandates, mostly from the state.

The budget choices the City of Hampton made have been tough and require new ways of doing business. Hampton made the tough choices we were called to make in the least damaging way possible and in a manner that respects the public input that was provided, not just in this budget year, but in prior years, as well. However, we are desperate for the state government to realize that local budgets are severely strained and the current situation is not sustainable without a dramatic decrease in services to the citizens of Hampton or an increase in revenues.

Constitutional Amendments Providing Local Tax Relief

The City of Hampton has the highest per capita population of veterans than any other locality in the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also in the United States. The City is proud to host our veterans and know that they have found a well-run and responsive local government with an abundance of natural resources, health care facilities, and a caring community. However, this fact brings with it a unique set of challenges especially as state mandated tax relief programs hits the City of Hampton local budget so dramatically.

As an example, the City of Hampton has experienced a financial strain resulting from the state mandated real estate tax exemption for disabled veterans. There has been a disproportional impact on Hampton due to the number of veterans residing in our City. For FY 2014 (July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014) consider the following:

City	Population	Qualifying Disabled Veterans	Revenue Impact
Hampton	137,436	437	\$1,029,452
Newport News	180,719	360	\$774,875
Chesapeake	231,542	506	\$1,360,357

Recognizing that Virginia voters supported this exemption overwhelmingly when it was presented as a 2010 referendum, Hampton thinks that it is absolutely commendable to honor our veterans. However, the General Assembly is not funding this program and Hampton is absorbing unsustainable and significant revenue loss. Unfortunately, this state mandated program, that has no means testing and no revenue replacement, is crushing our local option Elderly and Disabled Real Estate Tax Relief program.

The veteran program started in FY 2012 at a cost of \$613,745 to the City of Hampton and has essentially doubled with preliminary FY 2015 estimates at a cost of \$1,117,427 and this will continue to grow.

Just as public demands for public services like education, mental health, other human services programs, juvenile programs, environmental initiatives, economic development, recreation, and public safety continue to increase, the City is asking citizens to choose and prioritize which of these services must be reduced. This will necessitate what some have called draconian measures to other tax relief programs that are at local option.

The burden of taxation, as well as the benefits of services, should be shared and enjoyed by all. To the extent that the Commonwealth mandates relief for certain groups, the General Assembly should refrain from enacting policies and Constitutional amendments that do not adequately explain the effects of tax relief on citizens or how the tax relief would be paid for. With no income guidelines, there is more than anecdotal evidence that tax relief is not always necessary. Therefore, the City urges in the future that there be means testing for income purposes when tax relief programs are considered. Further, the City recommends that state constitutional amendments with local government fiscal impacts should require the burden of paying for it to be spread among all state citizens so that one or several localities are not adversely or unduly burdened.

BPOL, Machinery and Tools Tax

The City of Hampton asks the General Assembly to reject legislation that will reduce, eliminate, or constrain local government revenue sources including BPOL, Machinery and Tools, and the Merchants Capital taxes.

Virginia takes great pride in being a business-friendly state. To that end, lawmakers continually look for ways to make the Commonwealth more appealing to businesses. While the City of Hampton applauds the efforts of the General Assembly to bring jobs and economic growth to Virginia, local government revenue should not be the bargaining chip with which this is accomplished. However, each year in the effort to lower the business tax burden, it is local revenue streams such as BPOL and Machinery and Tools taxes that are continually reviewed for reduction or elimination.

Statewide estimates for BPOL and Machinery and Tool tax revenue are approximately \$900 million annually. In Hampton, BPOL and Machinery and Tools taxes generate approximately \$14.5 million of the City's General Fund.

The City of Hampton requests that the General Assembly reject any legislation that will negatively impact local government revenue streams and/or cause the tax burden to be shifted to citizens.

Continued Funding for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund

Funding over the last several years to support local governments implementation of urban stormwater control based on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan have been instrumental in helping localities reduce pollution and runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. Protecting the Chesapeake Bay is crucial to the Commonwealth and we all must do what we can to reduce the flow of excess nutrients and sediment into the Chesapeake Bay.

The Stormwater Local Assistance Fund (SLAF), managed by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, supports our local efforts to reduce polluted runoff by funding for matching grants. The City of Hampton received grant funding through the SLAF in 2014 for the Coliseum Lake Retrofit Project. The Coliseum Lake Retrofit will convert a portion of the lake from open water to wetlands, slowing the movement of stormwater, stopping bank erosion, and reducing backflow during weather events that create unusually high tides.

The partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia for projects such as Coliseum Lake Retrofit demonstrates great benefits to the Chesapeake Bay. Support for continued investment in the SLAF will greatly assist localities in reducing pollution going into our streams and waterways.

The City of Hampton requests the Governor and the General Assembly's support for continued funding of the SLAF.